



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE: A STUDY ON GOWRIPURA VILLAGE

Economics

Dr. Anneshi R.

Assistant Professor of Economics, ADBFG College, Harapanahalli

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INTRODUCTION

Women play a significant role in agriculture worldwide. Approximately 70% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, and 10% of those involved in food processing are women. They also account for 60% to 90% of rural marketing activities, making up more than two-thirds of the agricultural workforce in West Africa, where up to 88% of the labor force in trade is female.

Despite their substantial contributions, women often remain excluded from major political and decision-making processes. Even though they are responsible for producing a significant portion of food in developing countries, they tend to suffer from higher levels of malnutrition compared to men. In many rural societies, women consume less food than men, particularly during food shortages, pre-harvest periods, or when their workload increases without a corresponding rise in food intake.

Women play a vital role in agricultural production across the world. In Nigeria, they are actively engaged in farming activities, contributing 60% to 80% of the labor force for tasks such as planting, weeding, processing, transportation, marketing, and storage. Additionally, they are responsible for two-thirds of food production in the country. The outdated notion that "women are the weaker sex" is no longer valid, as women form the backbone of agricultural labor. It is estimated that they contribute 40% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 50% to the economies of developing nations.

Despite these significant contributions, women are often marginalized and undervalued in traditional agricultural and economic analyses. Many of them live below the poverty line, facing systemic challenges that prevent them from fully benefiting from their work.

Meaning

In many regions, women's participation in both formal and informal labor markets has increased significantly over the past decades. Their share in the workforce continues to rise, and more women are engaging in employment outside the household. However, this shift has not been accompanied by a reduction in their unpaid domestic and community responsibilities.

While some women have advanced within economic structures, many—particularly those facing additional social and economic barriers—continue to struggle for economic autonomy and sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families. Persistent obstacles hinder their ability to fully participate in and benefit from economic opportunities, highlighting the need for targeted policies and support to ensure gender equality in agriculture and beyond.

The Role of Rural Women in Agriculture:

Empowering women to claim their rights and access resources such as land, leadership opportunities, and choices leads to economic growth, enhanced food security, and improved prospects for current and future generations. As Michelle Bachelet, former Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, stated: "When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership opportunities, and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced, and prospects are improved for current and future generations."

Women are the backbone of rural and national economies, comprising 43% of the world's agricultural labor force—a figure that rises to 70% in some countries. In Africa, 80% of agricultural production comes from small-scale farmers, who are mostly rural women. Despite their significant contributions, these women often lack access to and control

over land and productive resources. Over the past decade, several African countries have adopted new land laws to strengthen women's land ownership rights, improving the situation for rural women.

However, the lack of appreciation for the role of rural women in agriculture is harmful and leads to the absence of specific policies addressing their needs. This oversight contributes to high levels of poverty, illiteracy, and non-involvement in the design and planning of programs and policies. Involving women in these processes fosters mutual learning and ensures that their real and specific needs are met. Despite their important roles in agricultural economies, rural women in Africa suffer from the highest illiteracy rates and are the most visible face of poverty.

Women play a crucial role in ensuring livelihoods, especially in rural areas, through their significant efforts in agricultural production. Their work helps guarantee self-sustenance, but it is often insufficient to cover other needs such as healthcare, education for their children, and the acquisition of necessary goods. This limitation is due to their restricted financial capacity, inefficient supply chains, and poor conservation of surpluses. Additionally, challenges like climate change further exacerbate these issues. Agriculture remains the main alternative for rural women and is a vital aspect of gender relations in these communities.

Women's Participation and Empowerment:

Regardless of gender, creed, caste, religion, or race, participation and empowerment are fundamental principles. Provisions should be made to promote the causes of marginalized sections of the population. Relevant articles of the constitution regarding women's participation can be referenced to understand these provisions better.

In summary, recognizing and enhancing the role of women, particularly in rural agricultural settings, is crucial for sustainable development. Their participation and empowerment lead to broader economic growth, improved food security, and the overall well-being of societies.

Legal Provisions for Women's Participation

- Article 9: The state shall promote the establishment of local government institutions composed of representatives from the respective areas. These institutions shall ensure special representation for marginalized groups.
- Article 10: Measures shall be taken to guarantee the participation of women in all spheres of national life.
- Article 19(1): The state shall strive to ensure women's active involvement in all aspects of national development.
- Article 27: All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection under the law.

Objectives of the Study

- Examining the personal and socio, education and economic characteristics of the respondents.
- Evaluating the impact of selected socio-economic characteristics and access to economic resources on women's participation in agricultural production.
- Identifying the key challenges hindering women's involvement in agricultural activities.

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data sources.

- Primary Data: Collected through structured questionnaires and direct personal interviews.
- Secondary Data: Sourced from various websites, magazines, journals, and government publications.

The research design follows both descriptive and exploratory approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's participation in agriculture.

Survey Analysis and Interpretation

Introduction:

A survey is an in-depth study of a particular subject, involving the collection of firsthand experiences from respondents. In this study, a survey was conducted to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of women's participation in agriculture. Female agricultural workers often face various challenges, including issues related to wages and workplace facilities.

To understand these challenges better, a structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed to both male and female agricultural workers. The data collected through this survey will be analyzed using statistical tools such as averages, percentages, graphs, and charts to derive meaningful insights.

Interpretation

Interpretation involves converting raw data into meaningful information to draw inferences that lead to conclusions and solutions. The interpretation process follows two key phases: induction (reasoning from observations to general conclusions) and deduction (applying general principles to specific observations). This study primarily employs an inductive approach, where data is systematically tabulated and analyzed.

Data analysis was conducted to extract relevant and actionable insights from the collected data. Simple statistical tools such as percentages, graphs, and charts were used to facilitate the interpretation of results in a clear and concise manner.

Classification of Male and Female Workers in Agriculture:

Particulars	Male	Females
Agricultural 2013	65%	35%
Agricultural 2023	60%	40%

Source Field Survey

According to the table, 35% of female workers and 65% of male workers participated in agriculture in both 2013 and 2023. Over the years, agricultural participation has increased, with 60% of male workers and 40% of female workers engaged in the sector in 2023.

Educational Qualification of Male and Female Workers

Education plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's personality and skills. An educated person is generally better equipped to handle tasks efficiently compared to an uneducated person. Workers with even basic education tend to perform better in their roles, as they possess fundamental knowledge that aids their work.

Education level	Male	Females
SSLC	40%	50%
PUC	15%	25%
ITI	35%	5%
Below 7th	10	20%
Total	100	100

Source Field Survey

According to the table:

- 20% of female workers and 10% of male workers have studied below the 7th grade.
- 35% of male workers and 5% of female workers have completed ITI (Industrial Training Institute) education.
- 25% of both male and female workers have completed PUC (Pre-University Course).
- 40% of male workers and 50% of female workers have completed SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate).

This data reflects the academic qualifications of male and female workers in the agricultural sector.

Classification of Male and Female Workers by Age Group

Age plays a crucial role in agricultural work, as it affects the efficiency and productivity of workers. Analyzing the age distribution of male and female workers helps in understanding workforce trends in the agricultural sector.

Age group	Male	Females
20-25	15%	20%
25-30	25%	30%
30-40	50%	45%
40 and above	10%	5%
Total	100	100

Source Field Survey

Classification of Wage Differences Between Male and Female Workers

In the agricultural sector, both male and female laborers receive wages for their work. However, male laborers generally earn higher wages compared to female workers. This wage disparity highlights the existing gender gap in agricultural earnings.

Age group	2022	2023
Male	500	800
Female	250	300

The table presents wage differences in the agricultural sector. In 2022, the daily wage gap between male and female workers was ₹500, with males earning ₹750 and females earning ₹250. However, in 2023, both male and female workers received equal daily wages of ₹800."

Working Hours of Male and Female Workers

Shifts	Male	Female
7 am – 3pm (A)		
3pm – 11 pm (B)		
11pm – 7am (C)		X

According to agricultural work schedules, there are three shifts: Shift A, Shift B, and Shift C, along with a general shift. Male workers are allowed to work in all shifts, whereas female workers are restricted to Shift A and Shift B due to security reasons.

CONCLUSION

Women's participation in agriculture is a significant and evolving concept in our country today. Women actively contribute to agricultural activities, and their socio-economic empowerment is reflected in national development programs.

Economic empowerment plays a crucial role in improving women's status in society. True empowerment is not just about sharing power but about genuinely enabling individuals to take control of their lives. It is a process through which individuals gain confidence and the ability to influence their environment.

Women's empowerment consists of interrelated and mutually reinforcing components, including:

- Awareness and skill development
- Participation and greater control
- Decision-making power
- Actions to promote gender equality

Women's contributions are invaluable, and empowering them accelerates social progress. Investing in women's skills and providing them with opportunities leads to economic growth and overall national development. The empowerment of rural women benefits not only individuals but also families and communities as a whole.

Women's empowerment is a key developmental goal in India. Microfinance initiatives and government-backed credit programs play a vital role in empowering rural women. Many believe that women's empowerment is essential for achieving social and economic development and for ensuring equal rights and responsibilities. Among respondents, 83% agreed that overall development is the core aspect of women's empowerment.

Women are an integral part of society, and their empowerment is essential for progress. In developed countries, equality is already established, but in developing nations, there is still a need to uplift those who do not receive equal treatment. Strengthening women's roles in agriculture and other sectors is a crucial step toward achieving a more inclusive and equitable society.

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